



**I drink soda every day.**

**I'd like to cut back, but how do I wean myself off the sweet stuff?**

Beverages such as soda and fruit drinks are a major source of added sugar in the typical U.S. diet. Added sugar contributes calories but no essential nutrients to your diet.

The 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends limiting added sugar to less than 10 percent of calories a day. That's 200 calories for a 2,000-calorie diet. Consider that a 12-ounce can of soda has 126 calories from added sugar.

What about artificial sweeteners? Artificial sweeteners are hundreds of times sweeter than table sugar. That's a lot of sweetness. Compare that with apples or oranges. They're sweet but probably don't hit the "wow" level on your sweetness scale.

Maybe you're thinking, "But I like a lot of sweetness." Have your taste buds become so accustomed to super-sweet drinks that the natural sweetness in foods, such as fruits, pales in comparison?

To find out, try this: Ditch the added sugar and artificial sweeteners in your diet for two weeks. Think of it as a palate cleanse. For the next two weeks, choose foods that contain little or no added sugar or artificial sweetener.

Here are the details:

Check ingredient lists and food labels. You'll see added sugar in foods that you might not expect, such as pasta sauces, crackers, pizzas and more.

Choose foods that have 5 grams of added sugar or less a serving. You can find this information on the Nutrition Facts label. Added sugar must be listed on Nutrition Facts labels by July 2018. Some products already list it.

Also limit natural sweeteners, such as agave, honey and molasses, to 5 grams or less a serving.

Replace soda with sparkling or water, low-fat milk, or unsweetened tea or coffee.

Avoid artificial sweeteners as much as possible

Eat more whole fruits and vegetables — fresh or frozen. Fruits, vegetables and milk have natural sugars. That's OK. Your focus is on avoiding added sugar.

After two weeks, you'll find you're better able to appreciate the natural sweetness in whole foods, such as fruits and vegetables. You'll also realize that you can live without that daily soda.

Answers from [Katherine Zeratsky, R.D., L.D.](#)